



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Essential Services for Maternal and Child Health (SEMI)

PROJECT GOAL

To contribute to the reduction of maternal and child under-five mortality in the DRC by strengthening the health system and improving the quality, effectiveness and affordability of health services to achieve a sustainable impact in Kasai province.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues to face acute and complex humanitarian crises characterized by internal displacement and widespread insecurity. According to the World Bank, the maternal mortality rate is 547 deaths per 100,000 live births (2020) and mortality rate for children under five remains one of the highest in the world at 62 deaths per 1,000 live births (2021). These causes of death, often preventable, are aggravated by high rates of malnutrition, inability to access quality health care, lack of access to clean water and gender-based violence (GBV).

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded program for Essential Maternal and Child Health Services in the DRC, known by its French acronym "SEMI" (Services Essentiels de Santé Maternelle et Infantile), is a three-year health systems strengthening program implemented in all health zones in the Kasai province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The program uses targeted national support for evidence-based health policy reform. It is designed to improve the health of 1.6 million women, girls, and children and to put an end to preventable deaths in Kasai, which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the country (169 deaths per 100,000 live births). The program supports the implementation of the DRC government's National Health Development Plan (PNDS) and its priorities, including the promotion of universal healthcare coverage.

The SEMI project was designed to sustainably strengthen the health system of Kasai province across six key areas, working alongside key implementation partners (SANRU and PRODEK) with targeted support from technical partners (BAO, Maternity Foundation, Population Media Center), and in collaboration with DRC state actors. In addition to changes in geographical scope, FCDO's health programs have shifted from an initial focus on infrastructure development and service delivery to a greater emphasis on piloting, evaluating, and scaling up evidence-based initiatives to improve quality, access to, and availability of care.

SEMI has a two-pronged approach, based on global and DRC-context-specific evidence of what works:

- Strengthen health systems and improve access to quality, efficient, and affordable health services by improving the skills of health personnel, increasing the use of health information for better decision-making, improving drug supply chain management at sub-provincial level, supporting better preparedness for health emergencies, providing technical support to develop a national quality of care strategy and implementation plan, as well as through public finance management and civil service reform.
- Build on gains in nutrition, maternal, child, and sexual and reproductive health, while working synergistically with other FCDO investments in the DRC to mutually strengthen the DRC's human capital and accelerate the drivers of a demographic



IMA WORLD HEALTH

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transition in a fragile post-conflict context, thereby contributing to stability.

The DRC remains burdened by a health system with a limited capacity to reduce high maternal, newborn and child mortality, decrease chronic malnutrition and respond to disease outbreaks. To address these key areas, SEMI's interventions focus on:

1. Improving access to essential maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services;
2. Promoting rights-based family planning services for women and girls; and
3. Strengthening the health system in the following areas:
 - a. Community governance mechanisms
 - b. Human resources for health management
 - c. Drug supply chain management
 - d. Health information system quality and completeness
 - e. Public finance management at the central level

Since 2000, IMA World Health has been a key partner in the DRC's development and humanitarian response, working alongside the Congolese government, development partners, and local and international organizations to revitalize the health system, improve WASH outcomes and fight disease. Through long-standing relationships with the Ministry of Health and a robust faith-based network, IMA has provided direct assistance in 251 health zones, consistently and distinctively operating in the country's most remote and challenging areas where successive armed conflicts and political instability have demanded creativity and unparalleled local partnership. With such expansive geographic coverage and enduring linkages with the government and local authorities, IMA's long-term investment in the DRC is working to change the narrative and the trajectory of health care.

RESULTS TO DATE

- **6,941,637 patients** have used curative services.
- **250,831 pregnant women** received four doses of intermittent preventative treatment (IPT) during antenatal visits, helping to prevent the transmission of malaria during pregnancy.
- **423,146 deliveries** were attended by a skilled birth attendant. These deliveries represent 96% of total deliveries in Kasai province.
- **90% of survivors of GBV** were seen at a supported health facility within 72 hours of an incident.
- **1,110,817 children under five** have been screened for malnutrition by community volunteers.
- **8,316 CODESAs (community health committee) meetings** were held to advance community voice and decision-making in health care.

The Corus Effect

Founded in 1960, IMA World Health is a leading public health organization operating in some of the world's most fragile settings. Through partnerships with change agents at the local and national level, our work centers on local capacity strengthening, global health security, health systems strengthening, social and behavior change, and integrated primary health care support and delivery.

IMA World Health leads global health programming at Corus International, an organization that unites an array of world-class nonprofits and businesses, each with specialized expertise. Our reach and capabilities are amplified by the other global leaders in our Corus International family, including Lutheran World Relief, CGA Technologies and Ground Up Investing. Our traditional and nontraditional approaches bring together the multi-dimensional, holistic solutions needed to truly achieve lasting change.

